MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

GIVEN BY

C. J. B. ALDIS, M.D.,

Physician to the London, Farringdon, and Surrey Dispensaries.

In what dispensaries have you acted as physician, and for what time?——I am acting as physician to the London Dispensary, which receives patients from a great portion of Bethnal-green and Spitalfields. At that dispensary, where I have acted for five years, we have about 3000 cases annually. I am physician to the Farringdon Dispensary, where we receive patients chiefly within a radius of a mile from Skinner-street, Snow-hill, chiefly from the neighbourhood of Holborn, Smithfield, Clerkenwell, Fleet-street, and the Old Bailey: there they receive 5400. I act as physician to the Surrey Dispensary, where we receive patients from two districts; one, the eastern district, extending from London Bridge to Millpond Bridge; and the western from London to Vauxhall Bridge. The whole number at the Surrey Dispensary may be about 7000. There are four physicians connected with the Surrey Dispensary. C. J. B. Aldis, M.D.

In these different dispensaries do you, when necessary, visit the patients at their own habitations?——Yes, we do.

In what condition do you find the places of habitation which you visit?——Generally one badly-conditioned room occupied by a whole family, badly ventilated and filthy. The greatest overcrowding is displayed in Field-lane and its neighbourhood, in the courts leading out of Smithfield, in the courts leading out of Fetter-lane, and the courts and buildings leading out of Fleet-street.

Some of the worst features of overcrowding are displayed on the Surrey side of the river, in the neighbourhood of the Mint, otherwise the characteristics are common. Within the rooms close offensive smells, the atmosphere quite vitiated, the fæcal

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smell of the cesspool is often distinguished; the courts are u cleansed and in a dirty condition. Some of the streets in Spita fields are remarkable for their filth. The most overcrowding the district of the London Dispensary is detected in the neig bourhood of Artillery-passage, Bell-lane, and Petticoat-lane.

It has been stated in evidence before the Board, that the ove crowding in the houses in the vicinity of Spitalfields has be greater in consequence of the alteration now in progress for t new street, does your knowledge of the district enable you to co firm this statement?——It does; for instance, Keate-stre Keate-court, and its immediate neighbourhood, situated in Sp talfields, have become overcrowded in consequence of the improv ments now going on in Essex-street, Whitechapel; and I ha been informed that four cases of fever have been received into t workhouse at the same time from one habitation in consequen of this increased pressure.

In what state do you find the drains, sewers, and water su plies?——I have observed them to be in a very neglected co dition. At the back of Ray-street, Clerkenwell, which is dense populated, a most offensive and open drain, a part of Fleet-ditc passes by the back of the houses, and takes its course paral with Great Saffron-hill, running under West-street, where it d appears. The evils from this open sewer are of course most fe in the summer, when the stench is intolerable. I have notic similar nuisances in Lock's-fields, Bermondsey, and Rotherhitl In many places the refuse water, which has been employed for t purposes of cooking and cleansing the houses, flows through gull holes into the kennels in the street, where it frequently remai stationary, producing in warm weather the most offensive exhal tions. Old Nichol-street, with some streets in its vicini situated in the district of the London Dispensary, is very offensi in warm weather, in consequence of the exhalations from stagna water. I am called upon to visit more cases of fever there th in any other part of the district. In regard to the water supplie they are little calculated to add either to the comfort or health the poor. In many courts there is only one supply of water f all its inhabitants, and it occupies a good deal of time to procu it and carry it back to the different rooms, where it soon becom covered with black scum. There is generally a filthy accumul tion on the surface of the water in the water-butts. In some cou there is no supply of water; such is the case in Ireland-court a Lusigneas-buildings, Red Lion-street, Spitalfields, which I visit to-day. One woman informed me that her husband lay dea and that she could not obtain water without the greatest difficul to wash his "rags." I went into her room, and found her hu band lying dead in a coffin; the room was small, dark, and dirt and occupied by six children, in addition to the father and moth

Another female represented the place to be "stinking alive" for the want of water. In the neighbourhood of Field-lane some persons have not even cesspools or privies; all their excrements are thrown into a little back yard, where they are allowed to accumulate for months together; others have a cesspool, but it is not provided with a drain, so that the excrements run into courts or streets, where they remain until a shower of rain washes them into the gutter. These are the places we are called upon most frequently to visit. C. J. B. Aldis, M.D.

What is the usual size of the rooms occupied by the single family?——Each room measure from 8 to 10 feet by 8, and from to 8 feet from the floor to the ceiling, in the neighbourhood of Field-lane.

What rents do they usually pay?——The rents are from 1*s.* to *s.* for each room weekly; the rent for some of the larger rooms is rom 3*s.* to 4*s.* 6*d.* per week.

Are the patients of the condition of artisans?——Generally so. n Spitalfields they consist chiefly of weavers,

Can you state the average earnings per week?——I am told that he average does not exceed 8*s.*, and from this even some deductons are made.

As physician to these institutions, what are the chief species of isease you find in the dispensaries most commonly attendant on he physical circumstances or upon the atmospheric impurity aused by filth, decomposing animal and vegetable matter, and efective ventilation?——The regularly recurrent diseases are fever ases, inflammatory affections, and derangements of the intestinal anal. When heat and moisture prevail, I anticipate the occurence of febrile diseases in various forms. In one place the same eneral state of the weather will be attended with ordinary fever; n another place, at the same time, with small-pox. At the same lace, where fever occurs, it will occur in different forms. For xample, in a house at the corner of George-street, Spicer-street, ear Hanbury's brewhouse. This house was situated in the front f a dirty swamp with stagnant water, now occupied by the new uildings of Hanbury's brewhouse. The house, from its situation n front of the swamp, would receive the force of the exhalations rom it whenever the wind was in the direction of it. I attended ix cases of remittent fever in one family. This family occupied ne room on the first floor. The father was a weaver in the same oom, and worked the loom close to the head of the eldest patient, is daughter, who lay on a bed on the floor in a state of delirium. She occasionally obtained intervals of repose, from which she was oused by the working of the loom. On the ground floor I was ttending, at the same time, a patient in another family, suffering rom scarlet fever. This is an example of such cases as those nentioned by Dr. Ferguson, and quoted by Dr. Mason Good,

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where persons stationed near marshes, those nearest to them suffi with the most severe form of fever, whilst those who occupie higher ground were attacked with a different and milder form fever. More commonly we are rather called upon to attend di ferent cases of fever occurring in different houses of the sam street than in different rooms of the same house. The differe forms of disease in the different houses we find attended by di ferent circumstances; one may have an open drain or cesspo behind; the other may be a house in a close and confined situ tion, admitting of little ventilation, and subject to the concentrate action of whatever impurity there may be. Generally we find th most severe attacks of disease in the worst conditioned place Very recently the places which I have mentioned as the worst co ditioned in the district of the Farringdon Dispensary, namel Field-lane, Clerkenwell, and the courts out of Fetter-lane, and th neighbourhood of Smithfield, have been subjected to an attack epidemic small-pox, which has been as virulent as a plague. have found as many as three cases of small-pox, a mother an her two children in one small bed, and another child in the nex room suffering from confluent small-pox; the mother having re fused to adopt my advice, and send the case first attacked to th small-pox hospital. The same disease has also been lately ver prevalent in the crowded parts of Bankside, which is situated i the western district of the Surrey Dispensary. It is now makin its appearance in Spitalfields.

In these ill-conditioned districts, are not the tradesmen an other classes living in better conditioned houses sometimes at tacked?——Sometimes, but comparatively rarely, and the disease are less fatal.

Besides this description of cases, do you find any species c chronic disease attendant on the physical condition of the popula tion in respect to defective ventilation and cleansing?——Thes cause the vitiated atmosphere, and the close state in which th patients live produces first physical depression, then functiona disorder, and ultimately organic change. Glandular swellings ar produced, scrofulous affections of different parts of the body, an scrofulous ophthalmia. Lately I accompanied Mr. Crookes, on of the surgeons to the Farringdon Dispensary, to one or two of hi cases. One of them was a case of scrofulous, or, as it is some times termed, strumous inflammation of the eyes. The place wa a low dark room, more like a den than the habitation of a human being. The patient was a female, and Mr. Crookes observed t her, medicine was of no use so long as she remained in so confined a place; that in order for her to recover she must change he residence. I have been accustomed to make similar observations to my own patients.

What is the ordinary physical condition of the population

brought up under the physical condition you describe?——They are emaciated, pale, and thin, and in a low condition, the cases of asthenia being of common occurrence. They complain of sinking, depression of the strength, of spirits, loss of appetite, accompanied by pains in different parts of the body, with disturbed sleep. This feebleness of constitution, among other causes that come before us, may be ascribed to the unwholesome habitations in which they reside. We find, indeed within our experience, considerable differences in respect to this depressed condition. I usually warn pupils that they must not bleed freely in the depressed districts. Bleeding, which may be resorted to freely in rural districts, or in comparatively healthy suburban town districts, cannot be resorted to safely to the same extent in the more crowded and depressed districts. I find, whatever may be their condition as to employment, that more stimulants are requisite in proportion to the depressing influence of the impure atmosphere in which they reside. In all cases of disease, the removal to a purer atmosphere, or from their close rooms to the more spacious and better ventilated wards of the hospital, gives early relief. The depressed and low condition of health in which these people are always found, induces habits of intemperance unfortunately so common among them.

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In such visits as you have to make into the rooms described, do any circumstances come under your observation which tend to show any moral as well as physical effects arising from this overcrowding?——Sometimes I have found grown-up young men sleeping in the same bed with a middle aged or young mother, brothers and sisters above the age of puberty lying in the same bed. In one case of melancholia in a young woman, which ended in insanity, she described the cause as arising from an incestuous intercourse with her brother. But the moral effects only come to our knowledge accidentally.

Do you find a due attention paid to the separation of the sexes in the lodging-houses, or that there is any distinction made in the apartments set apart for the married or single people?——The sexes are not properly separated in the lodging-houses, for single males and females sleep in the same room, in beds about six inches apart. The lodging-house keepers profess to make a distinction between the "married" and "single rooms," which no doubt is generally maintained, but not always. I happened to be in one of these lodging-houses in Keate-court the other day, and was shown into the "married room," where I observed five beds; the room was small, and four of the beds were large enough to contain two persons in each. The landlord told me that the fifth bed was occupied by a single female. Each lodger pays three-pence a-night for the bed, and if two individuals, male and female, enter the house together, no question is asked as to their being married, and they sleep in the same bed.

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You have twice mentioned Field-lane and its neighbourhood as a district where the inhabitants were densely crowded, and suffering from fever, do you find any other causes for the unhealthiness of this district?——The courts in Field-lane are low and ill-ventilated, leading to back yards and houses. The yards are strewed with decayed vegetables, dust heaps, dung, human excrements, and other putrescent substances. In one yard I have noticed some pigs. I find the cesspools imperfectly covered, and the privies in a most filthy condition. All this must necessarily occasion effluvial poisons. Red Lion-court, Saffron-hill, is quite unfit for human beings to dwell in; the houses are in a most dilapidated and dirty state. The privies and back yards are exceedingly disgusting, the former being filthy and out of repair, and both emitting a most horrible stench. One yard, especially pointed out to me, was filled with a mass of putridity. There are no privies to some of the houses. Other sources of unhealthiness may arise from the knackers' yards, in one of which I was informed that 60 horses were slaughtered weekly. Different kinds of animals are skinned here, and the bones boiled, which occasion a sickening smell, and heaps of bones may be seen in the yard, the washings of which, with the offal from the animals, are thrown into the Fleet-ditch already mentioned.

Do you now from dispensary practice find ague prevailing in any parts of London?——Patients attacked with ague not unfrequently apply for admission to the Farringdon Dispensary; they come from the "Valley of Holborn," as it is sometimes called, and I am told, on good authority, that intermittent fever is occasionally produced in Pimlico and Camden Town.

To what extent do you consider the excess of mortality, and its corresponding sickness, admit of abatement by administrative measures?——A very large diminution may without doubt be made; such a diminution as has been made in the sickness and mortality formerly prevalent amongst the higher and middle classes, apparently by the improved condition of their dwellings and the streets. Many of the districts I have had to visit are apparently as filthy as the whole of London was described to have been at the time of the plague. I have stated that the small-pox has fallen like a plague on some of the worst conditioned spots. The crowding of the habitations is apparently increasing. I am informed that the alterations now making in St. Giles's have contributed to the overcrowding a part of Westminster and Drury-lane; this I am informed by a pupil who lives close to St. Giles's. The epidemics, continued fever, and even small-pox are increasing, and I imagine that no one will venture to deny that conditions of the atmosphere may occur which might produce in these districts a dreadful mortality. I may mention that I have become so much impressed with the importance of ventilation that I have proposed to some

of the committee of the Surrey Dispensary the application of the ventilators used by Mr. Toynbee as one of the most important charities that can be promoted in the overcrowded neighbourhoods. C. J. B. Aldis, M.D.

The present registration of births shows an excess of births above even the excess of deaths in the least healthy of your districts; for example, it appears that the positive number of births beyond the rate of births in healthier districts, such as Camberwell for example, where the births appear to be 1 in 44, and in the less healthy districts the proportion is 1 in 33. Thus if the same difference existed in all parts of London it would cause an excess of births to the amount of 4633. Does your experience confirm this great excess of births?——The only means we have of judging of the births in these districts is by the number of children whom we see in these places. I find the rooms where we attend, the courts and alleys where the houses are situated, commonly crowded with children.